

Discussion Paper**7**

Title: **Whose student experience is it anyway? Exploring the Teaching-Learning Nexus in Academic Development**

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Session Learning Outcomes

By the end of this session, delegates will be able to:

Critically reflect on their own experience within the Teacher-Student nexus, or on that of academic staff that they teach.

Apply the outcomes of this reflection to reconsider and re-envisage student experience through the autobiographical lens of academic staff student experience.

Session Outline

Academic identity is complex, at times fragile, multiple and always-shifting (Quigley, 2011). This fluidity carries great potential in terms of allowing academics to shift seamlessly between roles and even between professions; however it can also be problematic, particularly for early career academics (ECA) who may be new to the HE environment and find themselves on uncertain professional ground. Loads (2010; 2016; 2017) discusses the liminality encountered by ECA and the destabilising effect of moving from an expert in one field to a novice in another (teaching), identifying the vulnerability experienced by ECA due to the difficulty of coming to terms with this transience of their professional selves. This research has grown out of one key question: What are the consequences for academic identity when academic teaching staff simultaneously become students through accessing academic development programmes such as a PGCert LTHE? A further question arose out of this: How does this experience of being a student at the same institution where they are teaching impact on the academic practice of these staff members? What does it mean for the student experience of their own students? Following well-documented discussion around the teaching-research nexus (Neumann 1992; 1994), the research proposes that we can also identify a teaching-learning nexus, which encapsulates a hybrid and fluid academic identity whereby the experience of being simultaneously a teacher and a student at the same institution creates a unique space with fertile potential for enhancing the wider student experience through critically reflective action.

This session presents the initial findings of a small scale qualitative inquiry into how participation on a PGCert LTHE impacts upon academic and professional identities, focussing in particular on academic staff experiences of being/becoming students. Of particular interest is the extent to which their interactions with their students have changed

as a result of their own experiences of being students at the institution, and whether they perceive that there is a direct impact of student experience born out of this hybrid identity. Using Brookfield's 4 lenses (1995) to foster critical self-reflection, participants will also be encouraged to use the autobiographical lens to explore their own experiences within the teaching-learning nexus, and to use the student and peer lenses to consider the experiences of their colleagues or those that they may teach as educational developers.

Session Activities and Approximate Timings

5 minutes: Getting to know participants and their roles, this is important for discussion later on

5 minutes: introductions and setting context of the research. Give out post its for questions and reflections.

15 minutes: Present overview of research and initial findings

10 minutes: Key questions: Have you experienced the teaching-learning nexus? Or have you witnessed it in action? Can this be harnessed and used to consciously impact on the wider student experience? What sorts of activities could be built into PGCert sessions in order to externalise this experience and make what is potentially tacit learning about student experiences more explicit? In small groups if numbers allow, possibly pairs, otherwise whole group discuss

5 minutes: Plenary and sharing of discussion. If a whole group discussion then 5 minutes will be added to the discussion time in lieu of plenary.

5 minutes: Summary and conclusions

References

- Bager-Elsborg, A. and Loads, D., 2016. Cut It Up and Put It Back Together: Cut-up and Collage as Tools to Overcome Academic Deadlock, *Journal of Perspectives on Applied Academic Practice* 4:1, 78-81
- Brookfield, S. 1995. *Becoming a Critically Reflective Teacher*. San-Francisco: Jossey Bass.
- Loads, D., 2010. "I'm a dancer" and "I've got a saucepan stuck on my head": metaphor in helping lecturers to develop being-for-uncertainty, *Teaching in Higher Education*, 15:4, 409-221.
- Neumann, R. 1992. Perceptions of the Teaching-Research Nexus: A Framework for Analysis. *Higher Education* 23 (2): 159-171.
- Neumann, R. The Teaching-Research Nexus: Applying a Framework to University Students' Learning Experiences. *European Journal of Education* 29 (3): 323-338.
- Quigley, S.A., 2011. Academic Identity: A Modern Perspective, *Educate* 11:1, 20-30. Available at: <http://www.educatejournal.org/index.php/educate/article/viewFile/245/245>
- Smart, F. and Loads, D., 2017. Poetic Transcription with a Twist: supporting early career academics through liminal spaces, *International Journal of Academic Development* 22:2, 134-143.

